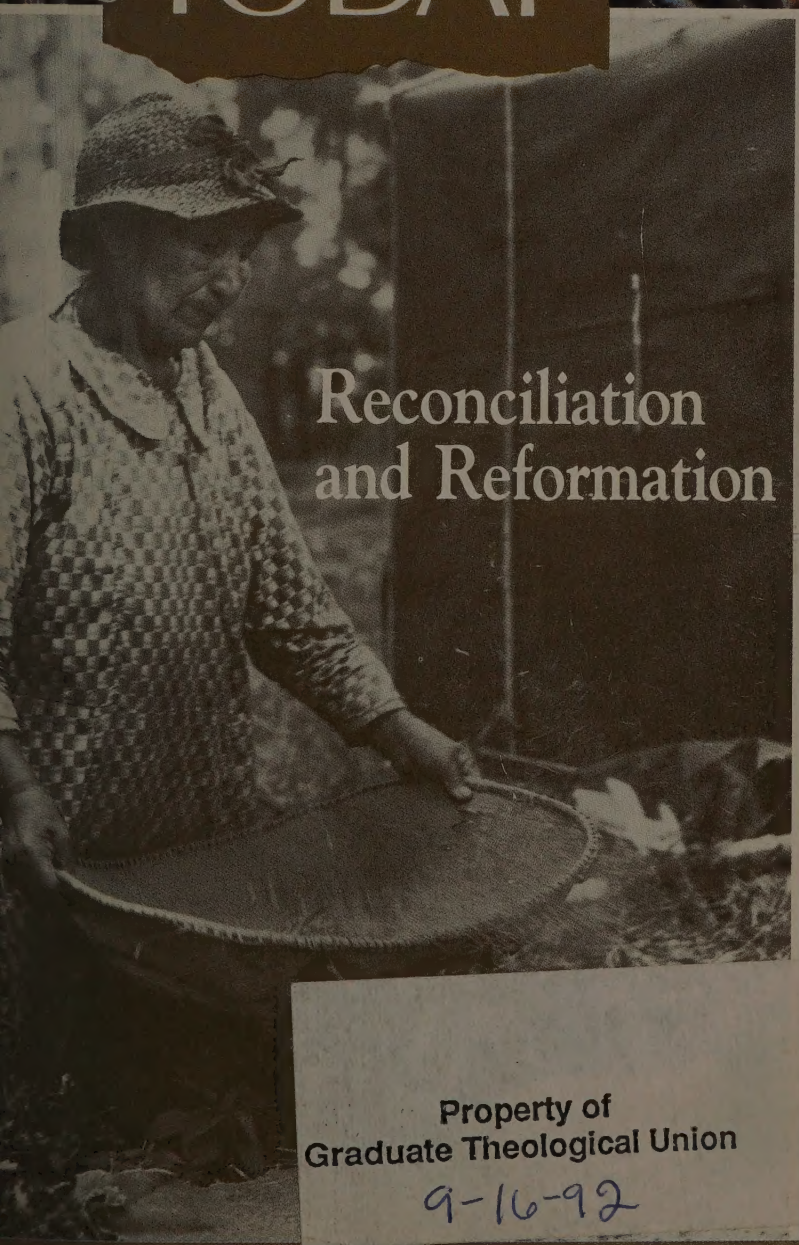


LUTHERAN  
WOMAN

OCTOBER  
1992

LEVEL  
ONE

# TODAY



## Reconciliation and Reformation

Property of  
Graduate Theological Union

9-16-92

*For Growth in Faith and Mission*

## Letters to the editor ♦♦

### Thanks for hymn

How grateful I was to read the meaningful and relevant hymn by the Rev. Gladys Moore ["God's Word Alive and Active!" March LWT]. Just what I was looking for as a choral prelude to the annual May Fellowship Day celebration sponsored by Church Women United. I was most grateful the hymn could be "duplicated without permission."

*Jeanette S. Mayer  
Brookfield, Connecticut*

### April response

I read the article in April's LWT by Barbara Lundblad ["Celebrating in the Midst of . . ."] with sadness and dismay. To print an article by one so openly and blatantly supportive of the homosexual lifestyle is both in bad taste and wrong. To support her teaching is to contradict anything that St. Paul has written in the first couple chapters of Romans and several chapters of 1 Corinthians.

I wonder how many have read it, and like myself, felt so offended that they want to put LWT aside and not read it anymore. I choose to protest instead.

*Mrs. Wilbur Beegles  
Colorado Springs, Colorado*

I want to say thank you to Kristine Carlson-Wee for writing "Celebrating Good Friday and Easter." It's just the message I needed!

My six-month old nephew died of SIDS [Sudden Infant Death Syndrome] in October 1991. Christmas was hard to celebrate without him, and my sister and family have al-

most been dreading Easter. If Michael would have been able to celebrate his first birthday on April Easter Sunday. I plan to pass on this issue of LWT to my sister in hope that she too can find a way to celebrate Good Friday and Easter this year and in the years to come.

*Darla Larson  
Opheim, Montana*

P.S. The cover of the April issue is beautiful.

Thank you! I have just received April LWT and I want you to know how much I appreciate its invitation to cover. It certainly puts "spring" in my day. I am hoping for more "earth" covers this year.

*La Vaille Anderson  
Wallingford, Iowa*

### The salsa era

Enclosed is my two-year subscription renewal for LWT. LWT is thoughtful, stimulating, moderate, spicy. Now that we are moving from the "catsup" era to the "salsa" era, even a bit more spice would be welcome with me. Surely the church is a place where we can struggle together about what it means to be women of faith in the thicket of all the divisive issues that surround us today. We may not always agree, but we can feast together in the season of grace and sensuous knowledge of God's grace (à la Babette!) and find ways to become loving communities of moral decision-making and action.

*Kathleen Hurty  
New York, New York*



## ver meditation ♦♦

To see the gentle nature of the Anishinabe elder on the front cover as she quietly "fans" the rice from the grains of wild rice evokes untold memories in me.

Her look of contentment, reverence and gratitude are expressions both witnessed and experienced countless times during the wild rice harvest on Leech Lake Reservation in northern Minnesota.

To understand the importance of wild rice to my people is to understand our history and our relationship to mother earth, spirit and community. Nearly a thousand years ago we were a people who lived on the shores of the Atlantic Ocean. Prophets spoke of a move west if we were to survive. The journey would be complete only when we reached a land where food grew abundantly in the water. This area would be our home and the food a gift from the Creator.

It has been 500 years since we first arrived in the Western Great Lakes region. During these years the Creator's gift of wild rice has been our most important food source. It has nourished our bodies and spirits—giving life to our communities. In

return, we give thanks through ceremony and prayer for this sacred food. In this way we acknowledge our connection to mother earth and to all of creation.

By acknowledging our connection to all, we gain insight into the intricacies of spirit, mind and body. We begin to understand how our words and deeds affect not only ourselves, family and community, but also the four-legged, the winged ones, the beings that crawl. . . . We begin to see the importance of living in harmony and balance with our surroundings. We see the benefits of walking a good path while we're here on this earth.

We also gain wisdom. Wisdom helps us to realize that no matter how hard we try to walk a good path there will be times when we stumble and hurt others. At these times it is vital to ask forgiveness . . . of those we hurt, of the one who made us . . . even of ourselves. In so doing, the process of reconciliation begins.

*Gordon Regguinti, a Leech Lake Anishinabe, lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He is the author of Sacred Harvest, a children's book on ricing (Lerner Publications, 1992) and managing editor of Colors—Minnesota's Journal of Opinion by Writers of Color.*

**THE COVER:** An Anishinabe (Ojibwe) woman fans wild rice beside her dwelling, 1937. From the Collection of the Minnesota Historical Society.

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## WOMEN OF THE AMERICAS

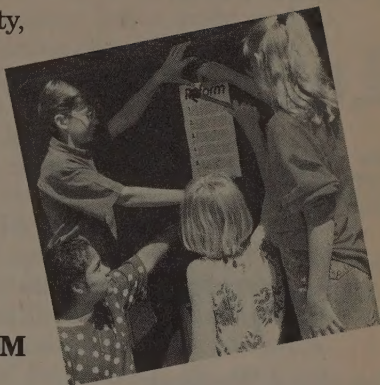
*Andrea Rivera-Cano*

What is the status of women of the Americas in church and in society, 500 years after Columbus? **A** **C** **G**

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the benefit of Women of the ELCA participants, articles relating to men of the ELCA mission areas are marked with these symbols: **A** = mission, **C** = community and **G** = growth.

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# Martin Luther's Seven Surprises

Timothy J. Wengert



Four hundred seventy-five years ago this month Martin Luther tacked to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg 95 sentences for debate and started in motion the reformation of the Christian church in Europe. This comes as little surprise to most Lutherans, used to celebrating Reformation Day on or about October 31st each year. What surprises many Lutherans about Luther is *what* he actually taught and *how* that teaching so excited Christians in his day. Here is a sampling of Luther's surprises:

## Surprise #1:

### The God on Mary's Lap.

Where do we look for God? Where justice wins out over wrong? In the glory and might of creation? In ourselves? And what kind of God do we find there? A god who punishes the wicked and rewards the good? A god with all the power? A god who looks like us? Martin Luther went to the Scriptures looking for just such a god, only to be overwhelmed by God in Jesus Christ: the God who comes in weakness, on a cross.

Nowhere does Luther express his wonder at God's weakness more poignantly than in his sermons on the Christmas story in Luke's gospel. He proclaims: "Behold Christ lying in the lap of his young mother. . . . Look at the Child, knowing nothing. Yet that which belongs to him, that your conscience should not fear but take comfort in him. Doubt nothing. Watch him springing in the lap of the maiden. Laugh with



n. Look upon this Lord of  
 ace and your spirit will be at  
 ace. See how God invites you  
 many ways. He places before  
 u a Babe with whom you may  
 ke refuge. . . . To me there is  
 greater consolation given to  
 mankind] than this, that  
 rist became [human], a child,  
 babe, playing in the lap and at  
 e breasts of his most gracious  
 ther. Who is there whom this  
 ht would not comfort? Now is  
 ercome the power of sin, death,  
 ll, conscience, and guilt, if you  
 ne to this gurgling Babe and  
 lieve that he is come, not to  
 lge you, but to save."<sup>1</sup>

## Surprise #2:

### God's Word Works Death and Life on Us.

ather's encounter with the cru-  
 ed God convinced him that  
 man attempts to explain God  
 ways tame God. That becomes  
 ost painfully clear when hu-  
 an beings get their hands on  
 od's word in the Bible and  
 ake up their minds that we  
 ust do something to it to make  
 work. Then the Bible becomes  
 a answer book telling us what  
 think, or a rule book telling us  
 hat to do, or even a crystal ball  
 lling us what to expect.

In Luther's encounter with  
 od's Word, the Word fought  
 ck, leapt off the page and did  
 something to him! This was es-  
 pecially true of Romans 1:17  
 "For in [the gospel] the righ-  
 usness of God is revealed  
 ough faith for faith. . . ." New  
 (revised Standard Version),  
 which condemned Luther's own

unrighteousness and gave him  
 God's righteousness as a gift.  
 God's Word, he later reflected, is  
 not a noun but a verb; it does  
 something to us. What God does  
 through that Word first is an  
 alien deed. Through the Law  
 God kills the rebel in us, what  
 Paul calls "our old self" (Romans  
 6:6) by confronting us with our  
 sin. Then through the gospel, the  
 good news, God does a deed ap-  
 propriate to God's nature, mak-  
 ing us alive as new people of faith  
 and consoling us with the prom-  
 ise of forgiveness, life and sal-  
 vation.

Elizabeth Cruciger, who con-  
 tributed to the first evangelical  
 hymnal printed in 1524, used the  
 following shocking language to  
 describe God's working word:

"Kill us through your own  
 goodness; Awaken us through  
 grace. Bring to the old such sick-  
 ness, That we new life em-  
 brace."<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup>From *The Martin Luther Christmas Book*, translated and arranged by Roland H. Bainton, copyright © 1948 by W. L. Jenkins. Used by permission of Westminster/John Knox Press.

<sup>2</sup> "Herr Christ der Einig Gotts Sohn," translated by the author. *Lutheran Book of Worship* 86, "The Only Son from Heaven," is a very loose paraphrase of this hymn, but does not include this verse.



### Surprise #3:

#### The Joyous Exchange.

Sin seems to get in the way of faith. It is easy to imagine that *we* have to get rid of sin first by our own efforts and decisions before God will come to us. However, in light of 2 Corinthians 5:21, Luther used an ancient Christian marriage metaphor to assert that true Christians are sinners declared saints by Christ.

The Roman law of Luther's day taught that what one spouse owned at the time of a marriage, the other spouse enjoyed the full use of. In our marriage with Christ by faith, a similar exchange takes place: our sin for Christ's righteousness. In 1516, Luther wrote a fellow monk:

"My dear brother, learn Christ and him crucified. Learn to pray to him and, despairing of yourself, say: 'Thou, Lord Jesus, art my righteousness, but I am thy sin. Thou hast taken upon thyself what is mine and hast given to me what is thine. Thou hast taken upon thyself what thou wast not and hast given to me what I was not.' Beware of as-

piring to such purity that you will not wish to be looked upon as a sinner, or to be one. For Christ dwells only in sinners. On this account he descended from heaven, where he dwelt among the righteous, to dwell among sinners."<sup>3</sup>

### Surprise #4:

#### Faith Is a Gift.

Luther recovered Paul's teaching that we are justified by faith alone and not by works. Yet hearing this, many of us simply turn faith into another work we must do in order to be saved. "You must be born again," we hear and then wonder, "Have I done what it takes?" Luther found the text says we are born again "of water and the Spirit." Neither the waters of Baptism nor the Holy Spirit are in our control. Thus, being born again by faith is not a work we do but God's work in us. Thus, in the Small Catechism Luther wrote this explanation to the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed:

"I believe that I cannot by my own understanding or effort believe in Jesus Christ my Lord, come to him. But the Holy Spirit has called me through the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, and sanctified and kept me in true faith."<sup>4</sup>

I believe I cannot believe. What surprising words from a Christian. Luther's confession contains comfort that faith is not a work we achieve, but a gift that the Holy Spirit works in us through the Gospel. Rebirth is as much a matter of grace as our first birth.



## Surprise #5:

### Leading the Devil by the Nose.

Have you ever been embarrassed by the question in the baptismal service, "Do you renounce . . . the devil and all his empty promises?" This seems like a throwback to the Dark Ages!

In fact, Baptism enters us into the battle between Christ and evil, where we stand on the side of the victor who won by losing his life. Luther realized that Christians are often subject to doubts, fears, sin and uncertainty. These are not merely signs of our weakness, but of the continuing conflict with the devil. In the face of the forces of evil, Luther could say confidently, "The only way to get away from the Devil is through faith in Christ, by saying: 'I have been baptized; I am a Christian.'" <sup>5</sup>

## Surprise #6:

### On Changing Diapers.

My father, a college teacher who has always taken an interest in religion, first alerted me to this surprise, namely that a Christian who, in faith, did the most ordinary, everyday tasks is of great value in God's eyes to the best saint. "I don't know where the quote is," my father would say, "but somewhere Luther said that a woman changing diapers to the glory of God is doing more acceptable work than monks with all their chants and prayers."

One day I found the quote and had my parents to read it to

them over the phone:

" . . . our natural reason . . . takes a look at married life, . . . turns up [its] nose and says, 'Alas, must I rock the baby, wash its diapers, make its bed, smell its stench, stay up nights with it, take care of it when it cries, heal its rashes and sores?' . . ."

"What then does Christian faith say to this? It opens its eyes, looks upon all these insignificant, distasteful, and despised duties in the Spirit, and is aware that they are all adorned with divine approval as with the costliest gold and jewels. It says, 'O God, because I am certain that you have created me as a man and hast from my body begotten this child, I also know for a certainty that it meets with thy perfect pleasure. I confess to thee that I am not worthy to rock the little babe or wash its diapers, or to be entrusted with the care of the child and its mother. . . .'

" . . . Now you tell me, when a father goes ahead and washes diapers or performs some other mean task for his child, and someone ridicules him as an effeminate fool—though that father is acting in the spirit just described and in Christian faith—my dear fellow you tell me, which of the two is most

---

<sup>3</sup> From *Luther: Letters of Spiritual Counsel*, tr. Theodore G. Tappert (*The Library of Christian Classics*, (XVIII) (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1955).

<sup>4</sup> From *The Small Catechism in Contemporary English with Lutheran Book of Worship Texts* (1979 edition), copyright © 1960, 1968.

<sup>5</sup> From Luther's "Table Talk," cited in Heiko Oberman, *Luther: Man between God and the Devil* (Yale University Press, 1989), p. 105.



keenly ridiculing the other? God, with all his angels and creatures, is smiling—not because that father is washing diapers, but because he is doing so in Christian faith.”<sup>6</sup>

“Did you hear that, Dad,” I inquired. “It was a *man* changing diapers!” The silence was broken by my mother’s voice from the other extension, “Yes, Norm, did you hear that?” Faith alone makes God smile at all the good we do in life.

## Surprise #7:

### That’s My Problem, Too.

Through Luther’s personal letters we glimpse his pastoral side as he struggles to console people in many of the same situations Christians face today. In these letters one thing stands out: Luther never talks down to people, but gives earthy advice based on his own struggles.

Even in the Large Catechism, when discussing the problem of those who did not participate in the Lord’s Supper, Luther does not simply judge his contempo-

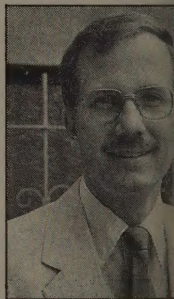
raries. Instead he shares his own weakness:

“But suppose you say, ‘What if I feel that I am unfit [to take communion]?’ Answer: This is my temptation, . . . Because of this we became so timid that everyone was thrown into consternation, saying, ‘Alas, I am not worthy!’ . . .

“People with such misgivings must learn it is the highest wisdom to realize that this sacrament does not depend upon our worthiness.”<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps it is just this personal honesty and surprising wisdom that makes Luther a resource for Lutherans and many other Christians nearly 450 years after his death. ■

*The Rev. Dr. Timothy J. Wengert is associate professor of the history of Christianity at Lutheran Theological Seminary at Philadelphia, and a Lutheran scholar.*



<sup>6</sup> From “The Estate of Marriage,” *Lutheran Works*, vol. 45, copyright © 1962 Fortress Press.

<sup>7</sup> From *The Book of Concord*, translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert, copyright 1959 Fortress Press.



# Reconciling for Diversity

Gordon J. Straw

I grew up in the Lutheran church and so always knew that October was a special month: the "birthday" of the Lutheran church. We would celebrate the accomplishments of Martin Luther and others, and learn how these men and women sacrificed to gain for us the things we take for granted today: worship in languages other than Latin and Bibles available for all to read.

Do we still lay claim to the spiritual commitment of those reformers? Do we take part in the reforming movement within the universal church today? Or do we merely celebrate a reformation that happened centuries ago?

In truth, the church today is at the very same place where Martin Luther found himself. Yes, many things are different from Luther's day: the issues, the names, the specific issues. We are not facing a powerful and monolithic 16th-century Roman Catholic church. However, there is an important similarity. Just as Martin Luther struggled against a church that had conformed to the traditions of the dominant society

of his day, so we too must struggle against the church when it takes the models of today's dominant society as its own. For in the church today—as in Luther's time—the only model for life is Christ, and faith in him.

In the church  
today—as in  
Luther's time—



the only model  
for life is Christ,  
and faith in him.

The question of unity and how it is perceived was a genuine concern of Martin Luther; so it is with us in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. There are two ways in which unity is perceived in the church: as *conformity* and as *diversity*. Those who define unity as conformity want to keep certain historically specific traditions

inviolable within the Christian faith. For them departing from these traditions is almost heretical. Those, however, who perceive unity as diversity flowing from the same basic Christian foundation, see varied expressions of that foundation as beneficial to all.

Martin Luther  
would have  
applauded  
the variety as  
an authentic  
expression of the faith!



**D**o we celebrate the Reformation of the 16th century, or God's continuing reformation of the life of the church? Allow me a personal example. I am a member of an African-American congregation. Appropriately, the style of the worship services is African-American. We use the *Lutheran Book of Worship*, but we adapt it to an African-American context. My congregation receives many visitors from around the country. These visitors are often deeply touched by the worship experience. Yet it is disturbing to hear that these visitors many times refer to the experience as *non-Lutheran*.

Such statements, by good and well-meaning people, are ironic, giv-

en the historical context of Martin Luther's reforming movement. Martin Luther would have enjoyed and applauded the variety as an authentic expression of the faith! What Martin Luther saw as the "enemy" faith—and what he fought so vigorously against—was a monocultural, monolithic view of the church. Interestingly, and sadly, that "enemy" has come full circle in North American Protestantism, including the Lutheran church, affecting all aspects of its life, especially its spiritual life.

Population statistics alone do not explain why mainline Protestant denominations in the United States are nearly all White. Apathy and lack of commitment are not the only reasons why youth and "baby boomers" leave the church. Like our church's financial crises, these are, rather, symptoms of a spiritual malaise. Churches in need of healing reformation.

As in the 16th century, so today we struggle with churches in this country that have taken contemporary models from politics and society, rather than Christ—as the unchanging norms for life. This is not to say that the Lutheran church should not take part in issues of political and social importance. But when faced with these issues, the church so often sides with the status quo.

Martin Luther was disturbed by the fact that the pope and other church leaders were more concerned about their alliances with the king than with the kingdom of God. Would he be disturbed today?

Martin Luther was not a heretic of the established church. His theology, his spirituality and the church practices he instituted were not questioned by the church authorities.



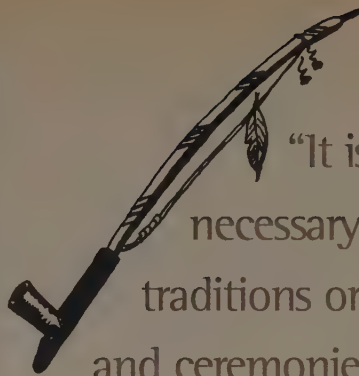
—they were ardently opposed. Her saw the unity of the church as diversity; the church of his day not.

The Lutheran church today so often chooses “the way things are.” A case in point: A great debate about multiculturalism has arisen in the church, and in so. The church debate focuses on whether adapting the Christian faith to differing cultural settings is true to the faith. The more orthodox Lutheran groups claim it is detrimental to a Lutheran understanding of the faith to adapt to other cultures.

For instance, singing German hymns accompanied by a pipe organ is Lutheran; singing gospel hymns accompanied by a Hammond organ and piano is not. This understanding is similar to society’s assumption that there is only one culture in the United States—that of European descent. All other cultural expressions are to be assimilated into the whole. This view of unity is understood as conformity.

How can we in the ELCA be faithful in recovering our reforming heritage? How can we see our unity as diverse unity, affirming and embracing all people in their faith? We need to return to the principles that empowered Martin Luther. And we need to study closely the stories of the disciples’ encounters with others in the Book of Acts, the body-of-Christ imagery in St. Paul’s letters in Romans. Let us pray together that we are one, not because we do all things alike, but because we are one in Christ.

Article VII of the Augsburg Confession states: “For the true unity of



“It is not necessary that traditions or rites and ceremonies, instituted by humans, should be alike everywhere.”

The Augsburg Confession

the church it is enough to agree concerning the teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments. It is not necessary that human traditions or rites and ceremonies, instituted by men, should be alike everywhere. It is as Paul says, ‘One faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all’ . . . (Ephesians 4:5,6).”\*

My prayer is that we in the ELCA work tirelessly toward *reconciling for diversity*, so that the focus of our unity is in Christ and Christ alone. ■

\*From *The Book of Concord*, translated and edited by Theodore G. Tappert, copyright © 1959 Fortress Press.

*The Rev. Gordon Straw, a member of the Brothertown Indian Nation, is director for Native American ministries of the ELCA.*



# JOY IN MISSION

Julie Dennison

**I**N MANY PARTS OF AFRICA, villagers come far down the road to greet visitors with song and dance. Bearing gifts of food and smiles, the villagers accompany the travelers to their destination.

Hospitality is a strong tradition in many parts of the world. Many peoples routinely open their homes and lives, sharing the best of themselves and their possessions with strangers.

In many areas of Africa no invitation for a meal or a visit is necessary. One need only show up. Whatever the family is engaged in—

eating, working or resting—the visitor is welcome to join.

But in North America, the pace of life often limits entertaining or even “dropping in” on family or friends, let alone welcoming a stranger. Busy schedules prohibit spontaneity and the joy of offering hospitality.

With limited time for family or friends, how much more we neglect and even fear, the stranger. Today in the United States, strangers are perceived with indifference or hostility. The homeless and street people who ask for help are frequently ignored, avoided, scorned.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we have been called to be hospitable: to share ourselves, our time and our possessions. God’s promise to all who give, especially those who share their hospitality, is the experience of abundant life: a “good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over” (Luke 6:38).

From our sisters and brothers in other cultures, we can relearn the habit of joyful hospitality, opening ourselves to celebration of life and one another in a new way. During our fam-

From our sisters and brothers in other cultures we can relearn the habit of joyful hospitality



NIGERIA



in Zimbabwe, we learned to in-  
new guests once a week for a  
l. To borrow Henri Nouwen's  
ise from *Reaching Out* (Double-  
1975), we, following our neigh-  
example of hospitality, "opened  
pace where former strangers  
d become friends."

orth American families or con-  
ations who have hosted inter-  
national students marvel how much  
e the hosts receive than give in  
experience. John Koenig in *New  
ament Hospitality* (Fortress,  
6) refers to these surprising role  
rsals as the "fluidity" in guest/  
roles in which mutuality be-  
es real.

ACH YEAR MANY international  
visitors are welcomed to the  
Lutheran Center in Chicago.  
might assume that Evangelical  
eran Church in America staff  
the hosts, offering guests our  
h's rich resources. However,  
e often the guests bear God's  
udance to us.

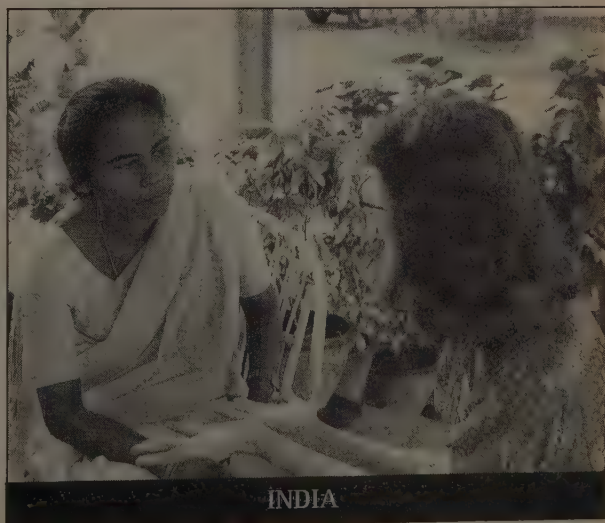
pastor from India touring the  
eran Center chapel asked, upon  
ng, whether he might offer a

prayer before continuing the visit.  
Grasping the hands of the guide and  
the other guests and raising them  
high, he began to sing with gusto,  
"Hallelu, hallelu, hallelu, hallelujah.  
Praise ye the Lord!" He then taught  
the group to sing the same song in  
Telugu, ending this spontaneous  
worship with a fervent prayer for the  
ministry and mission of all Chris-  
tians, including the Andhra Luther-  
an Church and the ELCA.

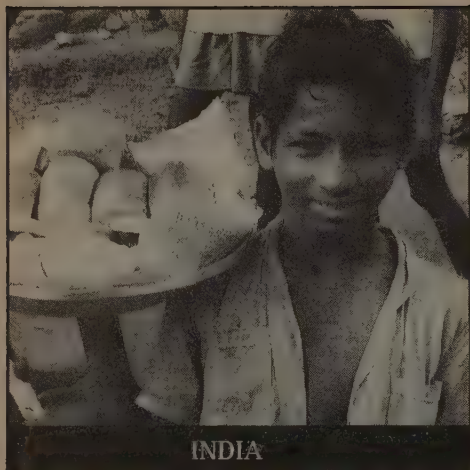
Hospitality helps us rejoice in the  
many and different parts that make  
up the whole of God's creation. Hos-  
pitality helps us recognize our need  
for one another. All created as parts  
of the body of Christ, all created in  
the image of God, we are all neces-  
sary to the whole—all equally im-  
portant to the fullness of creation. In-  
dividually and culturally, we are  
profoundly incomplete without each  
other. Hospitality is not dull duty,  
nor polite acceptance, nor mere tol-  
erance of others. Rather, hospitality  
is genuine delight in one another, joy  
in each other's presence and in life—  
even in the midst of pain and despair.

Liberation theologian Gustavo  
Gutierrez speaks of the incredible joy

Hospitality is  
genuine delight  
in one another,  
in each other's  
presence and  
in life.



INDIA



he finds in communities of people in Central America despite the poverty and oppression they suffer. If those who daily endure the threat of early and violent death can celebrate life, can we also recognize hospitality and delight in one another?

Despite contrary appearances, the victory has been won. Christ is raised. Life has overcome death. This truth compels us to join hands, circle round, skipping and singing. Why are we sorrowful? Remember Christ is risen indeed!

Sisters and brothers from all over the world remind us of this truth when their own joy overflows into our lives. Why step aside with folded arms when hands reach out to touch our lives? Why turn away from the gaze of forgiveness and love? How can we stand still when the glorious variety of God's creation calls us to join in the dance of the universe?

At Women of the ELCA's First Triennial Convention in Anaheim, California, in 1990, the last night's "Fare Share" event included music from a variety of cultures. One offering was a steel drum band beating out an irresistible rhythm. A few bold women spontaneously began to dance, urg-

ing others to join them. Soon more women did join, mingling guests and hosts into a beautiful unity. Sisters from different races, cultures, geographic locations, and ages danced together to the glory of God and celebration of life together. For a few minutes our worries and tears melted into gladness.

Author Edith Schaeffer in her book *Hidden Art* writes about the cross mark that "hoboes" during the Depression scribbled in chalk on the foundation of houses near the railroad lines. The cross mark indicated to other itinerants that this particular home offered hospitality, in other words, life. Schaeffer herself not only shared whatever food was available, but also decorated the meal trays with candles and flowers for any surprise guests.

Like these "houses of hospitality and life," we have been marked with a cross—the cross of the risen Christ, who poured out his life for others. We, the host and who now comes to us as guest in the stranger, the hungry, the naked and the imprisoned. As for those who bearers of the mark of the cross, we celebrate our lives as hosts and guest. In Christ we have become "homes for one another," giving and receiving life and joy. ■

*Julie Dennison, a pastor, retreat leader, and director for international scholarships in the ELCA's Division for Global Mission, is a former missionary in Cameroon and Zimbabwe and a mother of four.*





# No Ordinary Service

Judy Diers

sun was just rising in  
thern Namibia, and the  
t-filled air—a constant re-  
nder of the country's  
ught—let very little light  
ough. But it was still possi-  
to make out the figures of  
women who had formed a  
in front of the Lutheran  
rch in Oniipa. Four hours  
re the service, it was clear  
t May 17, 1992, would not  
an ordinary day for the

Evangelical Lutheran Church  
in Namibia (ELCIN). Today  
four women would be or-  
dained—Aune Shilongo Ha-  
munyela, Aino Kapewangolo,  
Wilhelmina Mpingana Shi-  
komba and Magdalena Shal-  
ongo—the first in ELCIN's his-  
tory.

It was the glorious beginning  
of a new chapter in the history  
of ELCIN, the Lutheran  
church to which over 400,000



400 people witness the first ordination of women in Namibia.

"[Women] have worked many years alongside the pastors. But they often didn't even have the chance to preach."

*Magdalena Shalongo*



Magdalena Shalongo



Aino Shilongiri Hamunye

Namibians (one-third of the country's population) belong. It is the only denomination whose headquarters are not in Windhoek, the country's capital. Since its congregations are concentrated in the far north (the Ovambo-speaking region of Namibia), the bishop and his staff are based in Oniipa, the center of the people.

The ELCIN's history is one of struggle and solidarity with the people of Namibia. Under the leadership of Bishop Kleopas Dumeni, the ELCIN stood by its people during the struggle for independence—and suffered a great deal of persecution because of its stand. But the church endured, and two years ago, the nation of Namibia achieved independence.

Magdalena Shalongo is the youngest of the four ordinands. Although she has just completed her qualifications for ordination, she acknowledged the struggle that her older sister theologians had to wage: "They have worked many years

alongside the pastors. But they often didn't even have a chance to preach—or to lead anything in the parishes."

Aino Kapewangolo shares a parish with her husband Nkurenkuru in the Kavango region for eight years. Even though they both had the same theological education—and a diploma—Aino served as a theologian while her husband served as pastor. She explains, "We went to the training seminary because we have a calling to be pastors, not just theologians. For us it is just to be as we are. We feel that we have a call to be a pastoral minister."

The lines outside the church that began at dawn continued to grow, and snaked all the way back to the road, forming a path for the procession. As the procession approached the church, the two lines pressed toward one another, barely allowing the pastors and pastors-to-be to pass through. Everyone wanted a glimpse of the women, scattered through





Wilhelmina Mpingana Shikomba



Aino Kapewangolo

"I would like to have a program where parish members come together around the issue of domestic violence."

*Aino  
Kapewangolo*

the group. When the first man was in sight, a high-pitched, enthusiastic wail greeted the crowd.

The church building filled to capacity of over 1000—not even half of the gathered crowd. Loudspeakers on the outside of the church brought the event to the over 1500 congregants who resigned themselves to a day in the sun. Very few left the grounds during the hour service.

The overflowing crowd was only testimony to the historic nature of the day, but also to the continuing role of the church in the lives of the people of northern Namibia. It is the community around which life revolves, with health clinics and schools accompanying the church. It is here that people continue to come with their concerns and problems, which do not disappear with independence.

Along with its message of reconciliation, the church is addressing unfulfilled expecta-

tions; many people thought independence would bring manna from heaven. Yet for many families, the everyday struggle for survival continues. And it is the women who tend to bear the brunt of the problems and hardship on the stony road toward nation-building.

According to Wilhelmina Mpingana Shikomba, many male pastors have turned a deaf ear to the problems of women in their congregations. She identifies the primary concerns for women as unemployment, lack of education, and AIDS. "It is often only the man who is working for a wage in the family. He will use the money only for his own benefits without taking care of his wife and children. That is why you find many women struggling."

For Aino Kapewangolo, the most serious problem facing women is the violation of women on the street as well as in their own homes. The high rate of rape in the country has prompted her to consider offer-



Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Namibia.

The ordained women hope that their new positions will enable the church to deal more seriously with those problems that daily affect the lives of women.

ing a special program at the church. "I would like to have a program where the parish members would come together around the issue of domestic violence."

The ordained women hope that their new positions will enable the church to deal more seriously with those problems that daily affect the lives of women.

Another hope is that women in leadership will also move the Lutheran churches in Namibia closer to a time of uniting. There are still three different Lutheran churches in Namibia: the ELCIN, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Republic of Namibia (ELCRN) and the Deutsche Evangelische Lutherische Kirche (DELK). But now that they all allow for the ordination of women, Aino Kapewangolo is confident that there will be more fellowship among them.

"We think we can start uniting the Lutherans through the

grass roots, and discussing amongst women," she explains. "Because women are leaders in the parishes, they can easily call people together. Women can understand each other better. . . . There doesn't seem to be any interest among male pastors to unite. In the past, we couldn't ask our male pastors to call the other Lutherans together—it was a waste of our time as women. We request such a thing. But women feel that it is unnatural to be separate, because we share the same problems as women—whether we belong to the ELCRN, ELCIN, or DELK."

*Judy Diers, a Lutheran from Waverly, Iowa, is an international correspondent now living in Southern Africa. She holds a master of arts in theology from Union Theological Seminary, New York City, and has worked for Christian and Crisis and Sojourner magazines.*



# Managing Dissent in the Church

Karl and Ruth Reko

**W**E'RE HEARING the word *reconciliation* a great deal lately. But before we can talk about reconciliation, we need to talk about *conflict* and *dis-*

We did not have to go far to find an example of this truth. The two of us prepared to write this article, we learned that we approach the task with different styles, that reconciling these differences makes no sense unless—in our case, two—first we learn how to deal with dissent!

Likewise we have found that after 27 years of marriage, the same issues seem to emerge over and over again, sometimes in new guise. For example, the issue of who “leads” and who “follows” surfaced in raising children together. It resurfaces over and over again, as now, in writing this article together. Such issues never really get resolved; they just get “managed” in different ways.

That's the nub of it: we are

talking about the management of dissent, not the elimination of dissent; about conflict management, not conflict resolution. A conflict with a five-year-old child who for the third time has just asked why she can't play in the street is “resolved” with the response, “. . . because I said so.” A conflict regarding check-in time between an employee with a daily hour-and-a-half commute in unpredictable traffic and one who lives down the block is “managed” by in-

When the church is especially energized, it is also especially filled with dissent.

stituting flex time. The dissenting opinions in this case are not *resolved*, but *managed*.

Yes, dissent even among the faithful can get out of hand—

in two extremes: 1) when it hurts people, and/or 2) when it hinders the mission of the church. But in between those two extremes is a broad area where dissent both helps people and the church's mission.

Take, for example, the hypothetical parish, "St. Concord." St. Concord is considering a building renovation program. One group of members feels strongly that the chancel needs renovation. Another group feels equally

that hires homeless workers. In a well-managed conflict, both sides win.

Handling dissent is not a new issue for the church. Peter and Paul had differing views on evangelizing Gentiles. How to minister to the needs of widows caused dissent between the early Greek and Jewish Christians. Proclaimers of God's grace and peace—people like Martin Luther and Martin Luther King Jr.—brought dissent and conflict with their message. It seems that when the church is especially energetic, it is also especially filled with dissent.

When conflicts occur around strongly held values, there may be discomfort, distance, and discord among people, but good will.

Consider "St. Acrimony" church. After St. Acrimony called a new pastor and engaged a new organist within a six-month period, some members felt that fewer and fewer familiar hymns were being used in worship.

Even after the church council raised the issue, one group in the congregation felt that opinions were not being heard. One or two families threatened to boycott meetings and not coming to worship—in other words, flee from the problem and thus "resolve" it. Another influential member tried to organize enough people to overpower the opposition and convince the new staff to abandon

## A church that respects diversity can be a fitting tool for sharing the many-faceted gospel in a diverse world.

strongly that the congregation should do more in social ministries. The issue could be "resolved" by a majority vote, with a set of losers and winners.

However, with an investment of time and energy the same issue could be managed in a number of ways. The renovation program could include a sizeable contribution to a social-service organization; the chancel renovation might include access for the handicapped; the chancel may be renovated by employing the services of a construction firm



ic except "golden oldies." While one member quoted scripture to prove God was on his side, another hated conflict so much she busied herself making peace at any price, and I felt bad about compromising my position.

But the members of St. Anthony had other options that would have allowed people to hold divergent views and still stay together. Such options would call upon their ability to be tolerant of dissent, that is, to manage it.

Living through the heat of the moment when "lines" are drawn, and defining in hard words the specifics of the differences, are not easy routes. We may need help, possibly from the outside, to understand that another person's view is as valid—even as acceptable—as our own. A church that respects diversity, and the dissent that can accompany such diversity, can be a fitting tool for sharing the many-faceted gospel in a diverse culture and world.

Love in the midst of tension requires courage and patience with others as well as with ourselves. Management of conflict is not sound easy, but it is hard to achieve. Asking forgiveness and being forgiving are at the heart of reconciliation in the family, among friends, in the church. Grace—God's riches at Christ's expense—gives us the strength to keep going back to love with whom we disagree.

We have the assurance that even though we may experience conflict in our lives, we are still redeemed to a new life where nothing need separate us from God's love, the love we have in common. ■

*Ruth Reko is director for leadership development in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's Division for Church in Society. Karl Reko works in the ELCA Division for Global Mission and the Department for Human Resources, mainly in recruitment and training.*



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## Where to start . . .

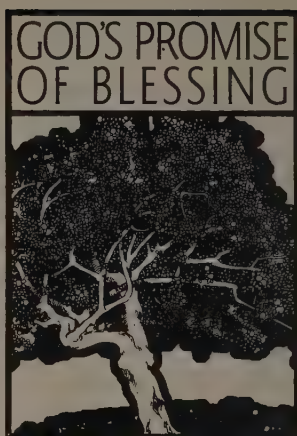
There are a number of good resources that explore conflict management, including:

■ *When Good People Quarrel: Studies of Conflict Resolution* (Herald Press, 1989) by Robert S. Kreider and Rachel W. Goossen, and *Church Fights: Managing Conflict in the Local Church* (Westminster John Knox, 1973) by Paul Kittlaus and Speed Leas.

■ Mediation-skills training is offered in many communities, often under the auspices of the Mennonite Church. Information about local resources for training may be sought through the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center, 528 E. Madison, Lombard, IL 60148-3599.

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# Session 10 To Become Like Children



Judith A. VanOsdol-Hansen  
Robert J. LaRiviere

**Bible Basis:** Matthew 18:1—20:34

**Study Text:** Matthew 18:1-35

## Session Overview

Matthew 18 deals with Christian community and a number of related themes. In the chapter we see that exhibiting child-like humility, resisting temptation, seeking those who stray, and living in forgiveness of sins are essential to Christian community.

## Opening

*Take away our pride and vain love of power,  
O Lord. Make us your children. Help us  
this hour and always to see you, and to hear  
your voice in each other. Amen.*

## Understanding the Word

“For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them” (Matthew 18:20). This great promise of Jesus is central to Christian life and worship. There is a special power and peace when people gather in Jesus’ name. However, Chris-



as do encounter the stumbling blocks of pride, temptation, envy, tolerance of sin, and reluctance to forgive. Wherever two or three are gathered, these distortions can also be present. But they can be overcome.

In this chapter, Matthew's gospel confronts each of these barriers to Christ-centered community. Jesus' strong language and illustrations show just how important his teachings are. Life in community with other Christians can be a great blessing. Yet this community is also delicate and fragile. Let us look at this balance.

In verses 1-5. Everyone seems to be interested in status. Even the disciples want to know who will be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven (verse 1). However, Jesus gives them a surprising and challenging answer. In order even to enter the kingdom, they must "change and become like children" (verse 3).

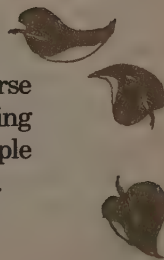
# 1

Look again at verses 1-4. Jesus calls a child and has the child stand before the disciples as an example of what they should be. List the qualities of children that you think adults could, or should, emulate. Then reread verse 4 carefully. What has to happen before we "become like children"? Recall that the Lord's Prayer begins with the words "Our Father." Then consider in what relationships and ways we are to become like children.

In verses 5-9. "These little ones who believe in me" (verse 9) are not just children. With these words, Jesus is speaking of all who believe in him, including the disciples, people of every degree, and possibly even those whose faith is weak.

# 2

According to verses 5-6, what is our responsibility toward God's children? How would you describe God's feelings for these "little children"?



### 3

**Read verses 7-9.** *Temptations to sin are bound to come (verse 7). Yet we are responsible both to resist temptation and to keep from tempting others. Why do you think Jesus uses such strong language in these verses? (See also 5:27-30.) How seriously do you think Christians take the problem of temptation today? Explain your answer.*

### 4

**Read 18:14.** *Then go back and read verses 10-14. According to these verses, what is God's will for the "little ones" who have faith in Jesus? If as Christians we pray "Your will be done" (6:10) and mean it, what should be our attitude toward each and every Christian?*

*Note that many children who are baptized either are not raised up in the faith, or they stray away later. What is God's will for these people (18:14)? As members of the Christian community, what is our responsibility for them?*

**Read verses 15-20.** These verses suggest that the lost sheep are not only those who leave the community, but anyone who sins. Jesus acts through all believers in the community. The seeking out described in these verses is to be done by anyone who sees the sin of another member. It is to be done confidentially and directly and then forgotten—if the person listens and repents (verse 15).

Only if this face-to-face approach fails is the sin to be brought to the attention of other Christians. First, one or two who also witness the sin are to accompany the first individual (verse 16).

If they are turned away, the matter is then to be brought to the whole church. If the voice of the church is not heard, the sinner is to be regarded as one who has never known the Lord ("Gentile" and "tax collector," the text describes them in verse 17), and separated from the community of the faithful.

What does this mean in contemporary terms? It means first airing our complaints and criticisms directly, but tactfully, to the person who is offending us. Gossip and destructive talk behind a person's back have no place in resolving problems between Christians.

In verse 18, then, Jesus concludes that the community can "bind" (not forgive) the sin of the unrepentant and "loose" (forgive) the sin of one who turns and changes. What is decided on this way on earth is carried out by God in heaven (verse

## 5

*Has anyone you know tried to apply verses 17-18 to a situation in their own life? What are the advantages of such an approach? What are the disadvantages, if any?*



verses 21-22. Peter, bold one that he is, apparently thinks he is making a generous offer by expressing his willingness to forgive seven times. But Jesus tells him to forgive "seventy-seven times" (also translated "seventy times seven"), another way of saying "forgive without limit."

Jesus' words have to be understood in context. In the preceding paragraph Jesus describes what forgiveness involves. It means allowing an offender an opportunity to repent and seek forgiveness; note that it does not mean excusing offenses. Destructive behavior must not be allowed to continue. No one is served by overlooking sins. Those within the family of believers must be willing to allow for forgiveness, however. They must seek out "sisters" and "brothers" (those in the family of faith), confronting them with their sins and with the promise of forgiveness. Achieving reconciliation, seeking out the alienated, is a high priority with God, and it should be the same in the church as well.

## 6

*How is such behavior different from what we might expect? What would it take to be "forgiveness"? What would reconciling behavior look like in your congregation?*



Read verses 23-35. Chapter 18 begins with the disciples' question about greatness in the kingdom of heaven. Jesus answers by telling us about our responsibility before God and to other Christians (verses 2-22). Now a dramatic parable concludes his teaching on Christian community, illustrating the radical nature of forgiveness (loosing) and judgment (binding).

A talent in this story may have been worth about \$1000. So the amount owed to the king, ten thousand talents, is astonishing to begin with. Both men in the parable are asking the impossible. The demand for payment is as unrealistic as the promise to pay is empty (verse 26).

According to the custom of his time, the king has every right to sell the servant, his family, and his possessions (verse 25). But instead he forgives the whole debt and sets the servant free (verse 27).

### 7

*Given the grandiose amount that this servant had been forgiven, how would you describe that same servant's behavior in verses 28-30? How do you account for this?*

The kingdom of God conflicts with the ways of a godless world. (Remember 6:24?) When the king discovers his servant's ingratitude, he revokes his forgiveness and sends him to jail until he shall pay all his debt—which is, of course, impossible.

### 8

*Take note of the warning in 18:35. Why do you think such a stern warning is necessary? What does it mean to "forgive from the heart"?*

### *Interpreting the Word*

A kindergarten teacher nearing retirement observed with some dismay, "The children don't have as much imagination or creativity as they used to. When I ask them to make up an ending to a story, or describe what a character in a story might

like, their answers are slower and less interesting. Television numbs their senses. It makes them passive observers. When commercials tell them what they need in order to be happy." The same may be true of adults as well.

## 9

*Commercial media can be persuasive and convincing, often competing with the voice of the Holy Spirit. How do you think television and other media can be temptations that cause Christians to stray from God's blessings and the life of Christian community? Give a specific example, if possible, to help explain your answer.*

### Living the Word

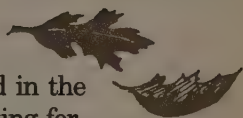
Forgiveness is at the heart of church community and in the heart of every member of the kingdom of God. Granting forgiveness always involves risk and responsibility. There is the risk of being hurt, or of being played for a fool.

However, the fear of pain or humiliation by itself is not sufficient reason to withhold forgiveness. Following Christ means we will suffer because of our desire to seek the righteousness that is God's will (see 5:10-12).

Suffering must be "for righteousness' sake" or "on my [Jesus'] account." Then, and only then, is it a blessing (5:10). When the person being forgiven changes, this is righteousness. If the person doesn't change, constant forgiveness can actually perpetuate the sin.

Granting forgiveness too cheaply can become a sin—the sin of ignoring or supporting another's stumbling block. Psychologists call this kind of action **codependency**. The term is new, but warnings against indifference to the needs or to the true condition of other people can be found throughout the Bible. Although our society differs greatly from that of the Near East in the first century, people have not changed all that much. The need for forgiveness, renewal, and community remains constant.

Sometimes a person will repeatedly promise to change and ask for forgiveness. Without the support of a caring community, this is nearly impossible. More and more frequently, peo-



ple are finding the help they need in groups, some in "12-step" groups (such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Adult Children of Alcoholics). Often these groups translate effectively into contemporary life the spirit of Chapter 18.

The church has the forgiving and strengthening presence of Jesus Christ, waiting to be called on in prayer and to be used in life. Consider the five stumbling blocks mentioned at the beginning of this study: pride, temptation, apathy, tolerance of sin, and reluctance to forgive. Any gathering of people has at least some of these.

Prayerfully consider one of these stumbling blocks. Identify it. Then pray for the strength that "two or more gathered in my name" can provide as we all work to "change and become like children."

## Looking Ahead

In Session 11 two parables and the judgment scene in Matthew 25:1-46 focus on the blessings of waiting, working and serving.

*The Rev. Judith VanOsdol-Hansen is pastor of Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Chicago, Illinois; the Rev. Robert LaRiviere is pastor of Christ Lutheran Church in Schoenersville, Pennsylvania.*

*God's Promise of Blessing: A Study of the Gospel of Matthew* was prepared by Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America under the direction of the Rev. Ivis LaRiviere-Mestre, Editor. Contributing Editor: the Rev. Nancy Koester. Copyright © 1992 Augsburg Fortress. May not be reproduced without permission.

Comments and questions relating to the Bible study should be sent to the Rev. Karen Battle, Director for Educational Resources, Women of the ELCA, 8765 W. Higgins Rd., Chicago, IL 60631-4189.





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# Personal Reformation

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I am a firm believer in reformation. I have been reformed myself on several occasions. You probably have been, too.

When I say "reformation," I don't mean those minor changes all of us have to make occasionally. Finding the library catalog on a computer instead of index cards or a favorite shop reorganized may be unnerving, but these situations demand readjustment, not reformation. No, I am speaking of those critical instances in our lives when the building blocks of who we are get shuffled and shifted in ways that make us different from who we used to be.

I can usually tell when I'm being reformed. I wake up with a start and the brand-new thing is there on my mind, where I know it has spent the night. It happened when my daughter was born. Even when I was spared her hungry cry in the night, Anne broke into my sleep. "You're a mother," said the voice inside my head. I didn't know for sure at the time

who the mother-me would be, but I knew I would never again be who I was before Anne's birth. That event had changed forever the structure of my self.

This year I was in Cameroon through Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's Woman to Woman program. For weeks after I returned, I awoke thinking about Cameroon. I could feel the old pieces of myself shifting and sliding to make room for this new fact: I had been in Africa.

Cameroon taught me that things are not always what they seem. As I bumped up against a new culture and foreign languages, I was constantly in situations in which I could not understand much of what was happening.

I will never forget my first terrifying night in Meiganga. As I crawled into bed, I heard someone coughing on the porch of my house. I was frozen with fear, the way I

had been the time I saw a prowler on my deck in Lincoln, Nebraska. At home I had called the police, but in Mombasa, Kenya there was no phone. Terrified, I silently checked the locks and prayed for protection. Finally the prowler went away. At 4 a.m. he and someone else were back on my porch, talking loudly and nearly paralyzing me with panic.



The author with a Bible school student's wife and her baby outside of Bible school student housing in Garoua, Cameroon.

I had been in Cameroon long enough, thank God, to understand that I didn't know all the rules and that things are not always what they seem. Suddenly the truth hit me: the men on my porch were guards! I melted into giggles, guffawing at how ludicrous it had been to pray for protection from my protectors. I had totally misread this new and peculiar place.

Being in God's kingdom is often like being a stranger in an unfamiliar culture, where we are surprised by the rules, and things are not what they seem. These are the rules of God's kingdom, I heard a preacher say several

Sundays ago: 1) If you are good, God will love you. 2) If you are bad, God will love you still.

Rule One makes perfect sense, and Rule Two is the gospel. Rule Two is the one we could never have imagined on our own. "If you are good, God will love you" ought to be followed by "If you are bad, God won't." But it isn't.

Rule Two is the one that reformed Luther. He arranged his life in ways that must have surprised God immensely. He thought he heard God prowling around on the porch of his life, ready to pounce on him for every misdeed. But then in the Scriptures he came face to face with the God who loves sinners and who waits, not to pounce, but to protect them from anyone and anything that can harm them. After this discovery, Luther was never the same person he had been.

The gospel is news that shuffles and shifts our insides too. Many of us have become so accustomed to God's love that it doesn't wake us with a start. That doesn't matter. Quietly it is making us different people, people who trust that things are not always what they seem—and that Rule Two makes all the difference.

*Karen Melang, a deaconess, is a communicator at the University of Nebraska Cooperative Extension and a regular "Give Us This Day" columnist. She is married and has two children, ages 14 and 17.*

## Brief Prayers on News Items

Sonia C. Groenewold

### You can help reduce childhood poverty

and for the World invites ELCA members to support legislation call for increased funding for three programs that help children. Noting that one of every five children in the United States is at risk of hunger, the Washington, D.C.-based Christian Hunger lobby titled its 1992 campaign "Every Fifth Child." People are urged to write letters to their representatives in Congress supporting increased funding for WIC, Head Start and Job Corps programs. [See *Prayers for the Parish*, May/June 1992, for further details.]

*Gracious God, make our actions consistent with our values.*

### ELCA creates link between U.S. and overseas churches

ELCA Companion Synod program promotes partnerships between synods and overseas churches. Many, like the Slovak Zion Church, have already exchanged visits with their partners. Members of the Slovak Evangelical [Lutheran] Church of the Augsburg Confession in Slovakia have visited in their partner churches. All ELCA synods are urged to a partner with help from the ELCA Division for Global Mis-

*God, bless the relationships of these companion synods.*

### ◆ LWF aids Burmese in Bangladesh

Lutheran World Federation provided emergency shelters for Burmese refugees who fled government persecution into neighboring Bangladesh, one of the world's poorest countries. Most refugees were without basic facilities and supplies. Since Burma gained independence from Britain in 1947, over 10 ethnic rebel groups have been waging a war of attrition against the Burmese government, demanding autonomy.

*Gracious God, thank you for organizations such as LWF.*

### ◆ Church helps people gain independence


Our Saviour Lutheran Church, Temple Hills, Maryland, as part of an interfaith group, operates a program to help highly motivated people who want to gain independence from food pantries and public-assistance programs. "Super Pantry" teaches budget preparation, job skills and cooking skills, along with other aspects of independent lives.

*Thank you, God, for creativity in ministries.*

Remember to add to your prayers people and issues in the news.

*Sonia C. Groenewold is senior news editor of The Lutheran.*





# On to Reconciliation Beyond Columbus

Wendy L. Helgemø

**As the world commemorates the quincentenary** (the 500th anniversary) of Columbus' landing in this hemisphere, the church stands in reconciliation with indigenous peoples of the Americas. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has designated 1992 as a year to *Remember, Repent, and Renew*. Another "three Rs" may help us move beyond reflection and take steps toward reconciliation with American Indian people: **Re-think, Respect, Restore.**

We need to **rethink** our relationships with Indian people. We need to rethink what we've been taught about Indian people and our attitudes toward them. We are beginning to realize that we need to listen to Indian people because they can and will speak for themselves. Only when we have heard them can we take steps toward reconciliation.

**Respect** for Indian people entails recognizing the unique cultures, languages and traditions of over 500 tribes in the United

States. Indian nicknames, logos for sports teams do honor Indian people. Imitating Indian chants or wearing excessive makeup and chicken feathers to show team spirit is disrespectful to Indian traditions. Only in the past year, as the Atlanta Braves played in baseball's World Series and the Washington Redskins football team went to the Super Bowl, have Indian peoples' offense over these imitations become widely recognized. Take time to educate others and let sports teams and schools know that Indian names, logos or mascots are inappropriate.

**Respect** also means honoring treaties and Indian sovereignty. The U.S. Constitution protects Indian *sovereignty* by reserving it to Congress, rather than individual states or other groups, and the authority to negotiate with Indian peoples. As a result, *treaties*—binding agreements between two or more sovereign nations—were negotiated

se treaties outline basic  
s which were *retained* by  
n people, *not given* to them.  
ree hundred and seventy-  
reaties were made between  
S. government and Indian  
ns. The treaties dealt with  
e and friendship, military  
nce, boundaries and trade.  
one treaty has been wholly  
ld by the federal govern-  
. Because of these broken  
ies, Indian people continu-  
uggle to protect their land  
from exploitation.

ir country needs to **restore**  
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ements made between the  
al government and Indian  
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American Indian Religious  
dom Act (AIRFA) was  
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as (Employment Division,  
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hwest Indian Cemetery  
ective Association) have  
uled Indian religious con-  
s in favor of the State, erod-  
basic constitutional right of  
n people. As citizens we can  
our members of Congress  
ug such holes in legislation  
harm Indian people. Con-  
ncy must be established be-  
n all branches of govern-  
t to provide justice for  
n people.

pecific congressional legisla-  
is needed to amend AIRFA  
rovide protection for: sacred  
the use of peyote in sacra-  
ts of Native American  
ches; religious rights of pris-  
s; and the use of eagle feath-  
Imagine the outrage of Lu-

therans if the Sacrament of Holy  
Communion were not recog-  
nized and the use of wine was  
forbidden! Only when Indian  
people can practice their relig-  
ions as freely as other Ameri-  
cans will the country be truly  
free.

## Consistency must be established between all branches of government to provide justice for Indian people.

For reconciliation, we as a  
church must move from reflec-  
tion to action. As Indian people  
face adverse interests—from  
anti-Indian hate groups to the  
U.S. government—allies are  
necessary to educate about In-  
dian people and advocate for In-  
dian issues. The church can join  
with others working for justice  
for Indian people as we remem-  
ber, repent, renew . . . and move  
to reconciliation. ■

*Wendy L. Helgemo, an enrolled  
member of the Winnebago na-  
tion, is a law student at the Uni-  
versity of Colorado at Boulder.  
She was advocacy  
coordinator at Hon-  
or Our Neighbors'  
Origins and Rights  
(HONOR) in Mil-  
waukee, Wisconsin,  
and is the daughter  
of the Rev. Marlene  
Whiterabbit and  
Harvey Helgemo.*



# Women of the Americas

Andrea Rivera-Cano

The women of the ancient sun kingdoms of the Americas—the Aztec, Maya, and the Inca—are long gone, along with hundreds of other indigenous communities. Yet vestiges of the values, languages and cultures that the Europeans countered upon their arrival 500 years ago survive.

From Mexico to Argentina, the “encounter of the two worlds” resulted in new peoples, including women of mixed heritage: the *mestizas*, the *mulattas*, the *criollas*—who have become part of the tapestry of Mexican, Central, and South American society.

What is the status of women in this region in church and in society, 500 years after Columbus?

Their challenges are great. The governments of the Americas, weighed down by massive debt and other pressures, are reducing funding for health, child care and education, and

adding to a recent World Encouragement Conference. Anglican Women held in Brazil. In many countries, runaway inflation has meant the loss of jobs for women and high costs for basic necessities for women. This contributes to an increase in domestic violence and the reinforcement of *machismo* (male sexism).

Women of all ages and ethnicities are speaking out and taking action against these issues. For instance, the Latin American and Caribbean Women's Health Network, based in Chile, publishes an informal quarterly, which, when linked

to the global publication ISIS International, connects more than 50,000 women in over 150 countries.

Women, Children and Family Ministries of the Latin American Council of Churches has issued a series of books on domestic abuse and violence. It is also sponsoring workshops on that theme as well as on men's roles, strengthening

**Women  
from Pijal,  
Ecuador**





ily, and counseling di-  
ced people.

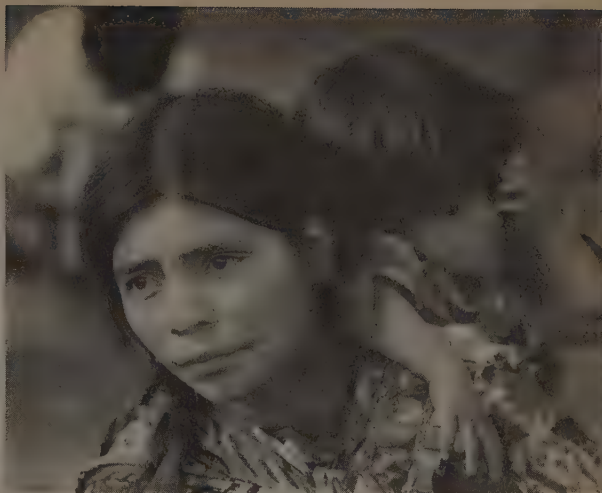
IRENE takes its name  
n the Greek word mean-  
peace, harmony, recon-  
ation and well-being.  
ed in Quito, Ecuador,  
ENE is a network of  
ily-counseling clinics  
oughout the region. It  
prepares clergy and la-  
to respond to people's  
ds arising from natural  
sters, terrorism, drug-  
ficking, armed conflicts,  
epidemics.

violence and natural dis-  
ers have contributed to the migration of people from one  
overished country to another. Thousands of refugee wom-  
—as well as women repatriated in the wake of Peace Ac-  
ls in El Salvador—are seeking to help their families.

n Argentina, the *Plaza de Mayo* Grandmothers, as they are  
ed (after a public square where they gathered to protest),  
tinue their investigations into the disappearance of their  
dren and grandchildren during the military dictatorship  
he 1970s, pressuring the government to find and punish  
se responsible. They have inspired similar groups in El  
vador and Guatemala, where torture and murders by  
th squads also occurred.

n Costa Rica, *el Proyecto de Defensa y Promocion de los  
echos de las Mujeres Centroamericanas* is one of the most  
sistent organizations monitoring the rights of women. With  
slogan, "*No Mas Violencia Contra Las Mujeres*" ("No More  
lence Against Women"), the group continues to cite the  
ence and rights abuses in Belize, Guatemala, Honduras,  
Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama, working  
h networks in the region and with international groups.  
e of the most visible Christian human rights activists, Ri-  
erta Menchú, a Guatemalan Quiché (an indigenous peo-  
, is a candidate for this year's Nobel Peace Prize.

Global connections, especially with church and ecumenical  
anizations, are strong and potentially influential. Latin  
erican women hold leadership positions with the Ecumen-  
Organization of Third World Theologians. As the network  
rdained women in Latin America and the Caribbean has  
anded, one woman from Puerto Rico and one from Argen-  
have achieved prominent positions on the World Council  
Churches. This year the inaugural issue of the Spanish  
odical *Mujeres en Accion* (*Women in Action*) was published



**Mother  
and child  
in Quezal-  
tenango,  
Guatemala**

for Lutheran women in the region, with support from the Lutheran World Federation.

There is a growing awareness of the negative effects of

ism, including prostitution, crime, children living on the streets. The menical Coalition on Third World Tism, based in Bangkok, Thailand, is s ing advice from Latin American w living in high-density resort areas on bating such inhumanities.

A regional network of church repre tatives concerned about street childre working toward the adoption of the UN Nations Convention on the Rights of Child. In Chile *Servicio Evangelico pa Desarrollo* (Evangelical Service for De opment), known as SEPADE, has sta a program to educate parents on imp ing the quality of life for infants, child and teens.

Unfortunately, such efforts run into barriers of class and race. In Brazil, Black women, particularly in the Bahi gion, are being sterilized without cons



**Rigoberta Menchú**

In the Andean region, *campesinas* (peasant women) still v the fields with newborns strapped to their backs. Through the region, domestic workers, usually indigenous or *mest* work for low wages and no benefits in middle- and upper-homes, including those of some Latin American church cials and American and European missionaries.

The media's coverage of the region's marginalized wom improving, beginning to tell not only of their plight, but of t promise. However, TV commercials and print advertisem rarely use these women's images in a positive way, and ins reinforce the image of *la rubia* (the blond woman) to sell p ucts. In Ecuador, indigenous women in a rural developn project are working on programs that teach critical view skills to families to counteract such stereotypes.

As women in the Americas seek to take control of their lives, they value the prayers and support of the global ch and sisters and brothers in the faith. ■

*Andrea Rivera-Cano is a communications consultant with Latin American Council of Churches in Quito, Ecuador. mission appointment is supported by the United Church Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). She served as communications officer of the World Council Churches U.S. office.*

# Saved by Grace

Ken Smith

In October, Lutherans remember the Reformation. We recall Luther, the struggles of the 16th century and the great principles on which the Reformation was founded: word alone, faith alone, grace alone, the priesthood of all believers.

Do you ever wonder what the Reformation would be like if it took place today? What would be the principles on which people of faith would stand? What theses, or statements, would be posted on the church's bulletin board or door in 1992?



Luther wrestled with human guilt. Today, however, Luther's medieval *guilt* has been replaced by contemporary *despair* as the human "malady of choice." Despair can take many forms: economic uneasiness, a sense of hope lost, a gray cloud of meaninglessness that runs through the routines of life, depression, feelings of helplessness over political and social processes out of control; emptiness in everyday relationships, the realization that even our planet is in decline.

But don't despair; for all this there is an antidote: the Lutheran idea of *justification by grace through faith*! Article IV of the Augsburg Confession—the article on grace—is important to any reformation today, because it speaks to the profound need of the contemporary human heart: to move beyond the despair we make of our own lives toward a new hope.

For we are not made right by our own efforts. We are not defined by what we make, or do, or own. We are not required



to make our own meaning or hope. Our lives are meaningful and hopeful and productive because God makes them so. Life may be a mess. We may be rejected. We may suffer loss. But in despair, we are loved by God. That love gives meaning, purpose and new hope to our lives. God's love restores, saves and equips us to move into a new future even amid the despair of the world.

Lutherans—Christians—need to rediscover this gospel. Then we need to spread the word. In a country in which suicide is the leading cause of nonaccidental death among young people, the doctrine of grace as the response to human despair is capable of saving lives. *Grace* could—should—be the central issue for today's reformation.

Perhaps not since the 16th-century German peasant wars there been a person more in need of the concept of grace than a contemporary young person in the United States. Think of the messages so many young people hear today from adult society—through media, advertising, institutions, even parents sometimes: you need to be controlled; your human worth depends on your appearance, your performance, the first impressions you make, what you own. No wonder many young people have trouble hearing the word of grace that can move them beyond despair to hope and salvation! Yet nothing is more important than to live that marvelous word. The future of the church (and perhaps even of our culture) rests upon youth hearing the good news of God's grace and grasping the faith.

To help youth hear that good word, we adults must do well, ourselves, not to think in terms of "liberal" or "conservative" but rather in terms of the tension between two concepts: the *traditional* and the *traditioning*. Let's explore how these two approaches work and why it makes sense to wrestle with them as all of us—youth and adults alike—seek to live lives of faith.

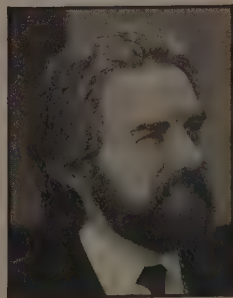
The *traditional* view is that faith is something that must be preserved in its pure form. Those who take this view attempt to maintain the faith's historical integrity. Tradition, they say, must be protected from change. Its truths are beyond space, time and context. For example, a traditional person might want all lessons read at church to come from the King James Version of the Bible, even if an older version might be more understandable to contemporary ears.

The *traditioning* view, on the other hand, sees tradition

something to be *preserved*, but as  
 ing that *preserves*. In this view, tra-  
 rather than being a museum piece, is  
 ke a life raft, or that which gives mean-  
 l shape to complex issues and the real,  
 a struggle to do right. The modern  
 is not a threat in a traditioning view  
 the arena in which tradition is itself  
 and reshaped so that people can man-  
 make it through sometimes senseless  
 ons. Tradition is like a well-worn fam-  
 , frayed around the edges, reshaped or  
 here and there by hard use. Just as  
 a's holes and scratches tell the story of  
 ly, tradition becomes itself the real  
 f God's people in this often crazy world.  
*traditional* and the *traditioning mind*  
 ach other. Without the traditional, the  
 on could be lost. That is a constant danger. Without  
 aditioning, it would make little human difference  
 er or not the tradition were lost. The traditional  
 clarity. The traditioning brings vitality. For example,  
 ditioning believer might advocate for a new worship  
 that meets a need in the congregation. The tradi-  
 believer might make sure the setting falls within  
 riate Lutheran norms. When we reflect upon what  
 dition of the Reformation might mean, we will find  
 nd more people calling for both clarity and vitality  
 their faith community and within themselves. Each  
 will listen for traditional and traditioning voices  
 her or his struggles to discover God's affirmation and  
 graceful work in the world.

Young people today can recover the sense of grace  
 at the heart of the Reformation, despair will be  
 me by God's grace. Article IV will stand. God's  
 ill be shared. ■

ev. Ken Smith, a former parish pastor, is the con-  
 ion and catechetics specialist in the Division for  
 egational Ministries of the Evangelical Lutheran  
 h in America.





# Reconciliation and Racism

Adele Stiles Resmer

Most of us remember the horror we felt when the video of Rodney King's beating in Los Angeles was first shown on television in 1991. Most of us were horrified again this past April as we watched Reginald Denny being beaten alongside his truck.

These two images of savagery broke through the protective devices that tell people "everything's fine." These images force us to admit there is much that is broken, violent, and in need of reconciliation in our society.

The verdict in the Rodney King case, which acquitted the police officers accused of beating King, symbolized for many the disparity in access to justice in this country between Blacks and Whites. Many felt the verdict exemplified how the suspicion of

Black men outweighs crimes committed against them. The verdict ignited long-simmering frustration and anger, and the city exploded. While the violence that resulted cannot be condoned or supported, the feelings of alienation, isolation, anger, frustration and hopelessness that contributed to it need to be understood. The realities that created these feelings must be addressed. There is to be reconciliation among us.

*To reconcile means to restore friendship or harmony, to settle and solve differences. If we want reconciliation, we must begin to recognize and acknowledge racism.*

We must acknowledge that those of us who are White benefit in this society simply by being White.

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Above: Worship at St. Mark Lutheran Church in Los Angeles, in May 1992, soon after the riots.



For example, when I knock on the door of an apartment complex, smiling people let me in. But I have also seen the looks of suspicion toward Black men and women who knocked on the same door.

We must recognize that the institutions in our country—banks, businesses, churches, schools—respond to people differently depending on their color. Few can argue that children of color receive anywhere near the same basic educational opportunities that White children receive.

We must commit ourselves to working for justice for all people in this country. This means confronting the manifestations of individual racism that exist among us, both within our churches and in those around us. It means working to transform the institutions in our society so that all children have access to good education and good basic health care. It means working against bigotry—in ourselves, our congregations, and in the institutions of our society. It means becoming involved in community activities and in local and national political processes.

Each thing is possible, and each of us can be involved. Our efforts can be transforming, reconciling. There are pictures that have not reached the television screen that are equally powerful as those that did. When racial doctors closed their offices in downtown Los Angeles, one man reached his own physician's practice and put together a schedule for visiting physicians into the city. Another woman worked with area congregations to open their doors to distribute food and provide shelter in the early days of rioting. Four people

risked their own lives to get Reginald Denny to a hospital.

Such are the roots of reconciliation. In order for these roots to take hold, we must acknowledge the problems that exist, examine our own participation in them, and work to bring about justice for all people.

### What specifically can we do?

■ Encourage your congregation to examine, through Bible study and congregational forums, racism in your church and community.

■ Get to know neighbors who are a different color from you, listen to their concerns and then respond to them.

■ Open congregational space to community groups.

■ Examine your congregation's hospitality and intentionally become more welcoming to all new members, including people who are a different color from you.

■ Share your Christian concern by becoming involved with your local school board or community council.

With special attention to the issues of race and justice in all arenas, the roots of reconciliation can become embedded in society. ■

*The Rev. Dr. Adele Stiles Resmer is associate executive director of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's Division for Church in Society. She is a member of Rogers Park Lutheran Church, Chicago.*



Blessed are . . . ♦♦

**"Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account." Matthew 5:11**

# An Almost-Very-Bad Da

Barbara Jurgensen

Janelle was feeling good as she drove to church. It was going to be a big day. Her friends Andy and Alicia Roberts were moving to another state, and the congregation was having a farewell party for them at the coffee hour. She was glad she'd been asked to say something—Andy and Alicia had helped her start the food pantry almost seven years earlier and had worked in it ever since.

The pantry was an important part of Janelle's life. When she was growing up, her father was sick and her mother had difficulty putting enough food on the table. Now, though her income since her husband's death was not large, Janelle found ways of helping others get through difficult times. By shopping at the grocery warehouse at the edge of town she saved enough on her own groceries to buy some for the pantry.

Once a month she and her teenage son Bill picked up the food their sister congregation collected. If there wasn't enough room in the church storage room or refrigerator, they'd take the rest home and stack it up at the end of the recreation room. Her next-door neighbor had given her an

old refrigerator so that when the pantry received more cheese than needed she could store it for the following week.

Bill and his friends Tom and Chad who often played Ping-Pong in the rec room, referred to the refrigerator and stacks of boxes as her 'grocery store.'

As Janelle reached the church, she parked the car and headed down the hall with her plate of raw vegetables for the coffee hour. She could hear a group of women working. Then, as she reached the kitchen, she heard Chad's mom say, "Well, I hope that she makes quite a profit selling the cheese that's supposed to be for the pantry!"

Horried, Janelle set the plate on the counter and tearfully ran back down the hall. Tom's mom ran after her.

"Janelle, don't pay any attention to her! Those of us who know you know you'd never do anything like that. She put her arms around Janelle and held her as Janelle cried.

After several minutes Janelle said, "I'm going home!" and ran to her car.

shopping at the  
grocery warehouse . . .  
Janelle saved enough  
for her own groceries  
to buy some for  
the pantry.



Tom's mom went back to the kitchen. She'd known Janelle all my life and she just wouldn't do that . . . Although the window they could see her sitting in her car, her head leaning over the steering wheel.

Chad's mom hurried out. "Janelle, roll down the window . . ." Janelle turned the knob.

Chad's mom's lips were trembling. "Sorry I said that. I'm not sure why that came out of me. I guess about myself these days. I haven't heard anybody else this . . . but Tuesday I found out that my husband . . . has been going out of town . . . on business. . . . He's been seeing another man . . . and he's leaving me for good."

Janelle unlocked the other door. "You don't have to stand out there," she said.

Chad's mom got in. "I'm really sorry about what I said. . . . I'm in such a state that I . . . I guess I just lashed out."

Janelle put her arms around her. "Don't worry. I know how it feels to lose someone you love."

They sat and cried together for a few minutes.

Then Janelle noticed her watch. "Church starts in four minutes!"

They dried their eyes, went in and sat together through the service.

At the farewell, Pastor Connie, who'd been briefed by Tom's mom on what happened in the kitchen, said that before she asked Janelle to tell about the Roberts' work in the pantry she wanted to say something about Janelle.

"The other day when I was shopping at the grocery warehouse—Janelle put me on to that idea as a way to give more to the pantry—I saw her there buying food for the pantry. We owe a lot to her for teaching us to share. And with the Roberts' leaving, we'll all need to pitch in and help her."

Chad's mom whispered to Janelle, "Put my name down as a volunteer." ■

*The Rev. Barbara Jurgensen is assistant professor at Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Columbus, Ohio. This is the ninth in a series of stories based on the Beatitudes.*



## MISSION:

# Community

## Thanks, Brother Martin

Last Christmas I visited my ailing mother in Korea. When I arrived, I discovered that she was so weak she could not leave the house. I didn't know what we would do all day at home, but I knew that I wanted to spend every bit of my time with her.

I can remember asking my mother, "What do you want to do with me?" She paused, and smiling, answered, "I want to read the Bible, pray and sing with you."

Every day we read the Korean Bible, prayed and sang in Korean, sometimes for three or four hours. It gave hope and comfort in the time of need for mother and me. In a strange way, God hides in the Bible and when we read the book, God finds his way into our minds and hearts. The glory of the gospel story, familiar passages of comfort, the Psalms, mixed with the old hymns I used to sing at Sunday school, brought back many old and pleasant memories in which we found great sources of strength and faith.

Maybe more than any other person, it was Martin Luther who gave the Bible, worship and daily expression of faith to people like my mother and me. Luther brought the Bible to

the people in their own language took worship and God's Word to the cathedrals and he gave the God's people where they were home, at work, every day and in every place.

Luther brought worship and God's Word to the real world, not just to monks and priests but to all people in all places, at all times so that God could be honored and served. Luther believed that all the religions of all nations and all the works of all pastors, priests and monks are absolutely nothing in comparison with the sacrifice and service of believers and every day as they walk in faith.

Thanks, brother Martin, for all the times mother and I read the Bible, prayed and sang hymns together in Korean. You and my mother always bear the name of Christian. Thanks to you we have the Bible in our own language and we can sing and praise with our own tongue, spreading the good news to every people in every tongue throughout the world.

*Kwang-Ja Yu  
Director for Ecumenical  
and Cross-Cultural  
Programming*

# MISSION:

# Action

## Present-Day Reformation Needed

In writing this within weeks of the Los Angeles riots. Racial tension, the disintegration of values, family structure, homeless and hungry people in our cities and rural areas, and our mistrust of elected officials fill our newspapers and minds. Grief, sadness, fear and despair are spread. It seems as if we are ripe for reformation.

Building Beloved Community: "Heart of a World Made New" is the theme of this year's Peace with Justice Week. Grass-roots consultants (who prophetically chose the theme in November 1991) spoke of isolation, alienation, insecurity and spiritual hunger in their communities. They agreed that there is an acute need for people to be in relationship and in community with one another.

Peace with Justice Week is celebrated each year between October 16 (World Food Day) and October 24 (United Nations Day and World Dismantlement Day). By the time you read this, it will be too late to order materials for this year, but it is not too late to join with thousands of others across the country to reflect on the chosen text, "A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put in you . . . I will remove from

your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 36:26). This year marks Peace with Justice Week's 10th year of local ecumenical organizing around "just peace" issues.

In the past Women of the ELCA groups have cooperated locally to sponsor brown-bag lunches with speakers on a variety of topics, to display children's art at a mall, and to give Peacemaker of the Year awards to individuals and organizations. Communities have cooperated for tree plantings, dramas, concerts, dances, TV satellite link-ups and the opening of a peace with justice center.

This year Peace with Justice Week could be combined with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's commemoration of the Columbus Quincentenary as a time of Remembrance, Repentance and Renewal. The quincentenary also calls us to reformation. Make this the year that you begin to build beloved community with other peacemakers in your local community or congregation.

*Joan Pope  
Director for Peace  
with Justice*

## MISSION:

*Growth*

### Women of the ELCA *Academic Scholarships*

In 1993, Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America will grant scholarship awards to approximately 15 mature Lutheran laywomen. Criteria for selection of applicants are:

- 1) applicants must be laywomen and members of ELCA congregations;
- 2) applicants must have interrupted their education for at least two years at some time since high school;
- 3) applicants must demonstrate the potential for high academic achievement;
- 4) applicants must be able to demonstrate financial need and Christian commitment; and
- 5) applicants must be enrolled in, or have been admitted to, an educational program.

Applicants who do not meet these requirements will not be considered for a scholarship award.

The scholarship committee looks for evidence of a carefully planned academic program, for references that document academic ability and Christian commitment, and for a sense that the applicant will have the opportunity and perseverance to realize her goals. In 1992, scholarships ranged from \$1000 to \$2000 each.

Several of the scholarships are limited to specific fields of study or carry other restrictions. For example, one scholarship is for graduate study only, another is for someone preparing for service abroad, and several are for women preparing for careers in the health professions.

Application forms and guidelines will be available after October 15. Applications and supporting materials are due to the Women of the ELCA churchwide office by March 1, 1993. To obtain an application, write to Scholarships, Women of the ELCA, 8765 West Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631-4189. ■



## Who Me, in D.C.?

Years from now, women will tell their daughters, sisters, nieces and friends how the Women of the ELCA entered the convention center in Washington, D.C., August 1993 for opening worship, air full of anticipation and the Spirit. They will tell of discoveries made in the "convention with-alls." They will tell of speakers workshops. Of issues and elec-

Will you be among those telling the stories? If you've wondered if you (yes, you) should attend the Women of the ELCA Second Triennial Convention, think about it. The convention is your opportunity to experience the organization at its greatest breadth and diversity. It's your opportunity to participate with women from throughout the ELCA in worship, study of the Word, celebrations, ministry, business, fellowship and fun. Just imagine 3000 women singing hymns of praise! Just imagine learning, experiencing and sharing "God's Gift of Hope"—the theme of the convention—in an environment of Christian sisterhood. Just imagine standing with women and children who live in poverty, committing yourself to prayerful ac-

As a community of women, called to discipleship, committed to each other and the church, the society and the world, we come together in conven-

tion to see, hear, and feel God's vision for the organization, and God's will for our part in that mission.

Each woman who participates in the convention is changed. And, in truth, the convention itself changes because of each woman who is there, or who is not there. Your voice, your prayers, your questions, your concerns are needed. *You* are invited to experience the Second Triennial Convention in Washington, D.C., August 7-10, 1993.

Don't hear the stories secondhand; see you in D.C. in '93! ■

*Valora Starr*

*Director for Growth  
and Witness*



### Convention Scholarships

Scholarships are available to help women ages 18-35 attend Women of the ELCA's Second Triennial Convention. For the criteria and application form, write Convention Scholarships, Women of the ELCA, 8765 W. Higgins Road, Chicago, IL 60631-4189. Completed applications must be postmarked no later than March 1, 1993, to be considered.

# Reconciliation: Rebellious, Rewarding, Risk

Sybil Y. Reisch

**B**eing a reconciler can mean being rebellious.

In order to have a relationship with my cousin, I had to work around my parents, who had told me "her family was no good."

To learn about Native American spirituality, I had to ignore an earlier teaching that said "what is not my tradition is not Christian."

Experience taught me to move beyond anti-Roman Catholic sentiment. For it was a Catholic family who ministered to my husband and me at a time when we were hurting terribly; with their help we were brought closer to God and each other.

**Reconciliation can be wonderfully rewarding.**

"Don't you get involved with that Asian," I was told. "They're not *our kind!*" But I became involved, and was blessed, when an Asian intern worked with our church youth group one summer. Rewards come when as reconciling bridges we speak to each other, and to those not often spoken to, or boost a child's self-worth, or disregard the statement "it cannot be done."

**Reconciliation can be risky.**

We gave our son with Down's syndrome the dignity of risk by

never doing for him those things he could do for himself, allowing him every chance to achieve as normal and full a life as possible. There's also risk when we share deep feelings in a Bible study group.

But are we not on this earth to be reconcilers, one to another? St. Paul says, "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Corinthians 5:18). Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa put it this way: "Some people think reconciliation is a soft option, that means papering over the cracks. But the biblical meaning means looking facts in the face and it can be very costly; it cost God the death of his own son."

*O God, encourage us to lean hard upon you as we live in the world each day as your reconciling people. In Jesus' name. Amen. ■*

*Sybil Y. Reisch, Hamlin, New York, participated in the Asian, Black, Hispanic, Native American writing workshop sponsored by the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. She is a teacher of special education students.*



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